

HERITAGE AUCTIONS

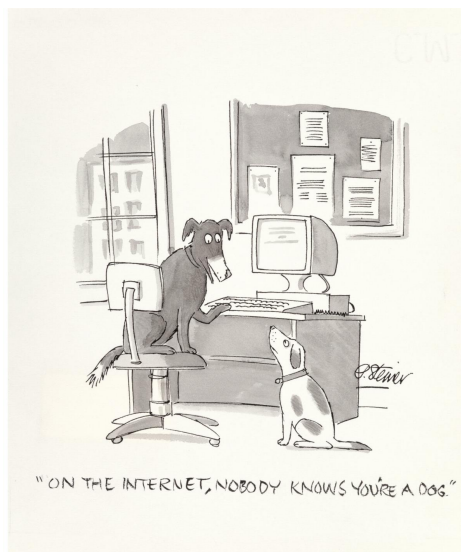
PRESS RELEASE

HERITAGE AUCTIONS

New Yorker's Most-Reprinted Cartoon Sells for \$175,000 at Heritage to Become World's Most Valuable Single-Panel Cartoon

'On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog' sparks bidding war during Illustration Art event that saw outstanding results for Alberto Vargas, Beatrix Potter, George Petty and more

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DALLAS, Texas (Oct. 9, 2023) — Way back in 1993, while many were still asking, "What is the internet?" The New Yorker ran one of its most famous cartoons: the black-and-white single-panel "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog" by the great Peter Steiner. Featuring two chatting dogs sitting in front of a desktop computer, it became the most reproduced cartoon in the long and distinguished history of the magazine that has counted among its cartoonists James Thurber, Roz Chast and Charles Addams. About Steiner's dogs, in 2000, the New York Times headlined an article with "Cartoon Captures Spirit of the Internet," and in 2013, the Washington Post noted the comic's anniversary "as iconic Internet cartoon turns 20, creator Peter Steiner knows the joke rings as relevant as ever."

The original drawing of the famous cartoon had remained out of eager collectors' hands until this past weekend when it sold for an astounding \$175,000 to an anonymous bidder who had been trying to buy it from the magazine and the artist since it was first published. It is the highest price ever paid for a single-panel cartoon and a record-breaker for Steiner. It led Heritage Auctions' Oct. 6 Illustration Art Signature® Auction, and after a fierce bidding war landed in the hands of a collector who understood its significance long before the cartoon became a prescient and profound (albeit ever-witty) meme for the impact the internet has had on all of our lives during this ongoing digital revolution. Steiner wasn't entirely sure what impulse drove its creation at the time: He recently told Heritage that it "wasn't about the internet at all. It was about my sense that I'm getting away with something."

"I realized the cartoon is autobiographical and that it's about being an imposter or feeling like an imposter," Steiner says. "I've had several checkered careers, and in everyone, I felt like a bit of a fraud. I mean, I think many people have that syndrome, the sense that, yeah, I've got everybody fooled."

Steiner drew more than 430 cartoons for The New Yorker, among them some of the magazine's funniest, sharpest and most resonant. He's since become a writer of spy novels and a painter. Steiner has long joked that no matter his ever-expanding résumé, he will one day be eulogized

solely as the guy who drew "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Steiner's cartoon is not the only noteworthy result in an auction that did well by several collector favorites; the event brought in a total of \$1.3 million for just over 400 lots with a 96% sell-through rate. Choice illustrations by the long-tenured king of pin-ups, Alberto Vargas, made a strong showing with the sale, starting with his full-color, fully-fleshed painting Spanish Lace from 1928 that combines intricate detail with Deco styling in a breathtaking portrait of a dark-haired beauty. It sold for \$38,750. His watercolor and pencil Bridal Nude brought in \$20,000, and his 1952 watercolor A Sunny Disposition, True: The Man's Magazine interior illustration came in at \$16,250.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

The work of Beatrix Potter, the grande dame of children's book illustration who took the world by storm in 1902 with the release of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, rarely shows up at auction. Still, on Friday, three illustrations from Potter's *There was an Old Woman Who lived in a Shoe*, circa 1917 (ink and watercolor on paper), sold for a satisfying \$37,500. These lovely and lyrical illustrations encompass all the coziness and wit of Potter's oeuvre.

The event saw robust results for vintage *Esquire* magazine watercolor illustrations by pin-up maestro George Petty. His knowingly titled Critics Praise my Line and Form, an *Esquire* magazine cover from January 1955, sold for \$25,000; his Pretty in Pink, an *Esquire* calendar illustration from January 1956, realized \$20,625; and his *Esquire* interior magazine illustration from August 1937 titled Now, None of Your Tricks, Everett! sold for \$18,750.

Petty's fellow traveler in pin-up fame, Gil Elvgren, had a great day on the block as well. Elvgren's five lots held their place in the pop-culture establishment and sold well, topped by the charming oil-on-canvas winkingly titled Bird's-Eye View (Well-built), from 1955, which introduces us to a smiling siren looking straight at the viewer; she's just finished building a birdhouse which she displays proudly as the hammer in her right hand catches her skirt. It's Elvgren at his cheeky best.

"We are thrilled with the results of this auction and cannot wait for the next!" says Meagen McMillan, Heritage's Senior Director of Illustration Art.

Complete results for Heritage's 2023 October 6 Illustration Art Signature® Auction can be found at [HA.com/8137](https://www.ha.com/8137).

Heritage Auctions is the largest fine art and collectibles auction house founded in the United States, and the world's largest collectibles auctioneer. Heritage maintains offices in New York, Dallas, Beverly Hills, Chicago, Palm Beach, London, Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam and Hong Kong.

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